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JAMESTOWN



THE CRADLE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

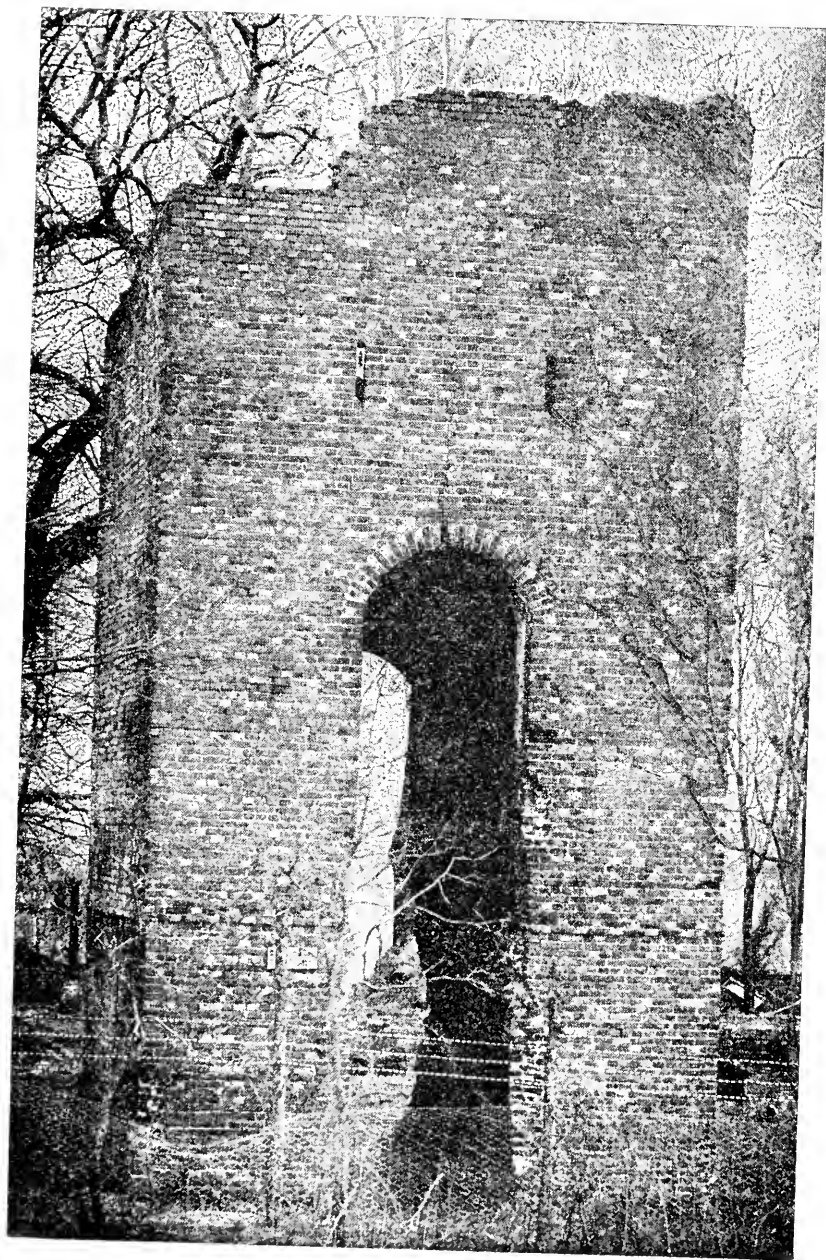


ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION
OF VIRGINIA ANTIQUITIES.



1901.

J. H. Russell.



OLD CHURCH TOWER AT JAMESTOWN.

JAMESTOWN.

On May 13, 1607, Captain JOHN SMITH and his companions of the voyage laid the foundation at Jamestown, Virginia, of the first permanent white colony in what is now known as the United States of America.

The Norseman had invaded New England several centuries before, and the Spaniards had explored the territory all along the Gulf. Sir Walter Raleigh's "lost colony of Roanoke" had been founded, and had disappeared from the shores of North Carolina, when, on the 13th May (old style), 1607, thirteen years before the Pilgrims sailed for America, the three little ships, the "Susan Constant," the "Godspeed," and the "Discovery," landed, with their precious cargo, on the little island, lying along the green shores of the river, called by the natives "Powhatan," after their great Indian chief.

Here the colonists established themselves and built a town, calling it "Jamestown" in honor of the King of England; as Virginia years before had been named for the Virgin Queen.

Here then was established the first permanent English settlement in America. Here first Anglo-Saxon civilization took root in the soil of the New World. Here first the Anglo-Saxon Church was firmly planted in the Western Hemisphere.

What was the first act of the weather-beaten colonists upon landing on the soil of the New World? It was to worship God! They had of course no church, but they hung "an old saile" between three or four trees, to shadow them from the sun," and there they gathered one hundred and five souls, all told, and gave thanks to God for their escape from the perils of their voyage, the Rev. Robert Hunt conducting the services in the primeval forest. In this simple church "the walls, were vales of wood," its seats "unhewed trees," its "pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees."

It was not long before the church of the torn sail was replaced by a structure which Smith thus describes: "A homely thing, like a barn, set upon crochets, covered with rafts, sedge and earth, as could neither well defend from wind nor raine."

In 1610, by command of Lord Delaware, this church was repaired, and in 1611 a log cabin was built by the direction of the Governor, Sir Thomas Dale.

In 1638 a brick building, 56 by 28 feet in dimension,

with a tower 18 feet square—through which it was entered—was built with the most substantial material and care, as its endurance to-day testifies. It was partially destroyed by fire in 1676, but restored and occupied until 1700, when the capital was removed to Williamsburg.

The old church tower still remains, pathetic in its desolation. It appeals to all with artistic or historic interest. Around and about it lies the old churchyard, which has suffered severely from the ravages of time, neglect, and vandalism. At least one honest man lies buried there. No reflection is intended on others, but we are sure of him, for his epitaph reads:

Here lyeth
WILLIAM SHERWOOD,
Born in the Parish of White
Chapelle,
Near London.
A Great Sinner
Waiting for a Joyful Ressurrection.

Perhaps the most eminent man buried at Jamestown was Rev. James Blair, the father and first president of

William and Mary College, whose tomb bears a long Latin inscription, which describes him as a faithful servant to his God and King. He lies near Lady Frances Berkeley, the relict of Sir William Berkeley, once Governor of the Virginia colony. His epitaph is as follows:

H. S. E. (Hic sepultus est)
 Vir Reverendus et Honorabilis
 JACOBUS BLAIR, A. M.
 Qui
 In Scotia natus
 In Academia Edinburgensi nutritus,
 Primo Angliam deinde Virginiam
 Venit:
 Qua Parte Tenarum
 Annos LVIII. Evangelii Preconis
 LIV. Commissarii
 Gulielmi et Mariae praesidis,
 e Britanniae Principum
 Consilarii
 Concillii Praesidis
 Coloniae Prefecti
 munera sustinuit:
 ornavit
 um oris venusti Decus,

ate hilari sine (?) hospitali
munificent
issimo egenis largo
omnibus corni
superavit,
Collegio bene devioram
Fundaverat
eus Bibliothecae suam
id aleudum Theologiae studiosum
juventutum pauperiorum instituendam
Testamento legavit
Cal. Maii in die
MDCCXLIII
aetat: LXXXVIII.
am desideratissimi
Seuis Laudem
is nepotibus commendabunt
pene marmore perenniora.

Sarah Blair, whose epitaph says that she “was universally and exceedingly beloved and lamented,” lies on the other side of her husband “in the hope of a blessed resurrection.” She was the daughter of the original Benjamin Harrison, from Surry, England.

There are many other quaint old tombs in the enclosure, in a more or less mutilated condition.

Jamestown Island lies about seventy miles below Richmond, and thirty above Newport News. It is two and a half miles long, and about a half mile wide. A recent survey gives the area as 1,600 acres. It is separated from the main shore by a swamp and a narrow stream, now crossed by a wooden bridge. It is thought that the colony landed on the lower end of Jamestown Island and the first houses were built there. But in a few years a move was made to the upper part, near the church, where a "new town," mentioned in the land patent, was built.

Only the briefest possible summary of the history of "James Citty" (what is practically the history of the country for one hundred years) can be given.

It was to Jamestown that the Indian Princess, Pocahontas, came as a little girl, to visit, to help, and later to warn the colonists. And here, in 1614, she was baptized at the font in the church, taking the name of Rebecca; here, later, she finally married John Rolfe, a highly respectable English gentleman.

Here, at Jamestown, the first legislative assembly ever convened in America met in council, with elected deputies, on July 30, 1619, seventeen months before the

Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Here, in 1622, George Sandys composed the first poem in Anglo-American literature, being his translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid and the first book of the *Æneid*.

At Jamestown, in April, 1635, occurred the first organized resistance to governmental oppression, when Governor Harvey was deposed.

In 1644, Opechancanough, the fierce old Indian chief, was brought to Jamestown, where he met his death.

In March, 1652, Governor Berkeley fortified the town and procured the assistance of several Dutch vessels lying in the river, to aid in resisting an attack by the Parliamentary forces; but he finally surrendered on easy and equitable terms.

Here, in 1660, with great rejoicing, the restoration of Charles II. was proclaimed.

In 1676, many of the most interesting events of Bacon's Rebellion occurred at Jamestown, and the little village, including State-house and church, were burnt to the ground by Bacon and his adherents.

About the year 1700, the seat of government was removed to Williamsburg, and Jamestown was soon almost entirely abandoned.

It is difficult to obtain any accurate idea of what Jamestown was like as the Capital of the Colony. The land grants give us, however, a few hints.

In 1624, there is a mention of a "Government's Garden;" in the same year, of the "New Town;" in 1637 of the "Brick Mill;" in 1639 of "the Church;" in 1644 of the "Church and the State House," which were near each other, and also near the river; in 1644 of the "Block House;" in 1662 of the "Churchyard;" in 1667 of "the Three Brick Houses" (which are stated to have been connected), and which were formerly called the "Old State House," the most western of which was sixty-seven feet from high water mark; in 1681 of "the Brick House," formerly called the "County House," which was sold by order of the Governor and Assembly prior to 1666; in 1683 of the "Brick Fort;" in 1689 of an "Old Ruined Turf Fort," on the river bank; in 1690 of the Churchyard; in 1694 of the "Ruins of Philip Ludwell's Three Brick Houses," situated between the State House and the County House, and in the same year of a lot, one of the boundaries of which was "the poles of the Churchyard."

Beverley, writing in 1706, says Jamestown was then almost deserted. As the owners of the smaller lots on island moved away, their land was sold or abandoned. In 1653 Edward Travis had a grant of 326 acres near the lower end. His family gradually acquired other portions by purchase or grant. In 1682 Edward (his son?), ob-

tained a re-grant for all his lands, he held 550 acres. This estate remained the property of the Travis family until within the past century. The other portion of the Island became the property of Edward Jacqueline and his descendants, the Amblers, whose large brick house has recently been destroyed by fire. This was the home of the two brothers, Richard and Jacqueline Ambler, who were so fortunate as to win from such rivals as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, the hands of Mary Cary and Rebecca Burwell.

The present wall around the graves in the churchyard was built early in 1800 by Mr. Ambler and Mr. Lee, of "Green Spring," who had the fragments of the wall remaining around the old church-yard taken down and used in building the smaller space containing the present tombs.

Two actions were fought near Jamestown in 1781, and heavy fortifications erected here during the late Civil War, are still standing.

For more than a century the Island, with its sacred associations and history, lay abandoned and neglected. It was finally purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Edward E. Barney, of Dayton, Ohio, who at once took measures for its safety. Large sums were spent by Mrs. Barney

in clearing up the under-brush and protecting the ruins of the church tower.

On May 3d, 1893, this public spirited lady presented twenty-two acres, including the church-yard and ruins, to the Association for Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, a duly chartered association, with its headquarters in Richmond, Va. They at once took charge, and enclosed with a wire screen the tower and the church-yard, so that the ruins cannot be molested. A custodian, who lives in the Fort, is constantly on the alert to protect the place.

Recent excavations have revealed the brick foundations of the two different churches above mentioned, with many other interesting and valuable relics. This historic effort will be further prosecuted until all is restored.

For long years the Island has suffered from the washing of the James river. By direct appeal to Congress the Association received the assurance that the United States would protect it from further damage. Two years ago Congress make an appropriation of \$10,000 to build a sea wall under the supervision of one of their own officials. An additional sum will be necessary to complete the work properly. For seven miles a swift current comes sweeping down unobstructed, and on the northern

end of the island the incessant pounding of the waves has crumbled the clay and carried away the sand to such an extent that the ruins of the old city of Jamestown now lie under water, as one may see if he goes out in a boat and runs along the shore.

A brick powder house, built by Captain John Smith, for the protection of arms and ammunition, was undermined, and the walls tumbled into the river, only a few years before the island became the property of the Association. Its location is marked by a mass of brick, which is plainly visible in the water, and which is held together by the original cement.

In 1907 the Association proposes to mark with befitting ceremonies this epoch in the history of our country. We appeal with confidence to all the people of America to join with us in the effort to preserve and honor the cradle of the Republic.

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